

LB41

.K35

Hollinger Corp.  
pH 8.5

AN ESSAY  
ON  
ENGLISH EDUCATION;

TOGETHER WITH  
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRESENT MODE  
OF TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

BY J. M. KESLER, M. D.

*Begin well if you wish to GO ON well.*

*In constructing any Edifice care should be taken to lay a GOOD  
FOUNDATION.*

*Teach a Child to think and give him words for his thoughts, and  
you will have more than half completed his Education.*

HARRISBURG:

PRINTED by JOHN WYETH.

1824.

*Aug 20 1826*

*Presented to me by Dr. John A. Paddy  
at Harrisburg*

LB41  
K35

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE remarks contained in the following sheets, are in the main, an extract from a series of Essays on Education written some years ago, and first published in the Morning Chronicle of Baltimore, in the Spring of 1819.

The request of a number of friends has urged the publication of the present extract in this form. Should it meet a favorable reception from the public, the whole series may probably, at some convenient time, make its appearance.

# PREFACE.



THE subject of Education has occupied the attention of persons of the first genius and acquirements in ancient and modern times. It is a matter of such great interest to the community, that too much cannot be said about it.

Among the ancients a scientific education was ardently sought after and highly esteemed ; but from the want of the art of printing, their facilities for obtaining it were very greatly inferior to ours. Of these superior advantages we have not yet made a proper use.

During the dark ages which succeeded the inroads of the Northern barbarians on the countries of Italy and Greece, we see but little attention paid to education, unless in the cloisters.

A higher value began to be set on learning during the time of Leo the Xth at Rome, and under the government of the family of the Medici at Florence.—This which has been appropriately termed the era of the revival of learning, produced many eminent teachers in Europe. It may however be observed that the *mode* to be pursued in the acquisition of knowledge, did not become a point of much written discussion till the time of Montaigne. He may be reckoned among the *first* writers on education among the moderns, either as to the order of time, or the simplicity of his plan of communicating instruction.

Since his time the catalogue of writers on this subject has become very extensive, including in it the names of Milton, Locke, Northmore, Fenelon, Watts, Condillac, Burgh, Knox, Darwin, De Genlis, Rousseau, Edgeworth, H. More, Hamilton, Pestalozzi, &c. &c.

Of these perhaps Locke, Condillac, De Genlis, Rousseau, Edgeworth and Pestalozzi have given us the best plans to be pursued in a course of teaching.

The method of instruction introduced by Pestalozzi and known

under his name, is without doubt the best that has yet been presented to the world. The most that we know of this system is derived from a sketch published in 1808, by J. Neef, who conducted a school near Philadelphia on that plan. But Neef's system is exceptionable in some parts, and from the best information, we can collect, differs from that of Pestalozzi in these exceptionable points.

The design of the present essay is to exhibit in a concise and simple manner, a method of teaching the English language which will include in it some of the prominent advantages of the Pestalozzian system. The rational and thinking plan of Pestalozzi leads us to notice the manner in which *early education* is at present conducted. The absurdity of teaching by *Spelling Books* is examined into and exposed ; and such a substitute is offered, as we believe will teach children to *think of what they are reading*. A constant reference is kept to this useful precept "Teach a child to *think* and give him *words for his thoughts* ; and you have more than half completed his Education "

As to the style of this essay it was our intention that it should be in some measure declamatory. It is designed for the mass of mankind, who will probably rather look at our opinions in such a dress than if we had put on more logical primness. We are conscious however of a want of due connexion in some parts of this tract.—For this we shall offer no apology ; but transfer the blame to the defective method in which we were educated, and adduce it as one more reason for a radical reform in the present mode of instruction.

With these remarks we commit our views to the public, believing that what is intended for their good, will be noticed by their indulgent attention.



## ESSAY, &c.

**E**DUCATION, in the general acceptation of the term, signifies the formation of such habits and the acquisition of such knowledge as may render the subject of it more useful to himself and to his fellow beings. It may be divided into physical, intellectual and moral.

Physical education consists in a course of exercises tending to invigorate the bodily functions.

Intellectual education pursues a course of exercises designed to develope the mental faculties, by communicating a knowledge of *language* and fixing a habit of *observing* and *reasoning*.

Moral education institutes a course of investigation into the relations in which a human being stands to the DEITY and to his fellow creatures.—It is strictly speaking a branch of intellectual education, but is of such great moment as to merit a separate division.

In giving our views on the subject of education we shall confine our attention chiefly to our second division.

Language is indispensably necessary to the prosecution of a course of intellectual education. We shall therefore commence our essay with a few remarks on the nature of language, and its influence in training the mind; and then add some observations on the present mode of teaching the English language in our initiatory schools: after which we shall venture to propose a plan which we humbly think may possess some advantages over the usual method of communicating English instruction.

Language has been defined to be a system of oral or visible signs,

by which we communicate our ideas to one another, or as a certain metaphysician perhaps more justly observes, a system of signs by which we excite in the mind of the person we address, a train of ideas *similar* to that which is passing in our own minds.

It is language that forms the grand characteristic distinction between man and the brute creation. It is only by means of this instrument that man is able to improve his condition and become a social and civilized being. For we see that the state and progress of civilization in any nation is uniformly indicated by the number of their terms and the propriety of their application. Indeed, were man deprived of the ability to form or use language, he would soon be reduced to a condition but little removed from the herding brute. Society would become a moral wilderness, as destitute of mental fruit as the barren waste is of vegetable productions. We should then see that the firmest ties and the strongest bonds of the civil compact as well as of the family circle, owe their stability and their worth to the invisible agency of words. Schlegel in his history of literature, remarks that "there is no impiety in saying that it was scarcely in the power of the DEITY to confer on man a more glorious present than language; by the medium of which HE himself is revealed to us, and which at once affords the strongest bond of union, and the best instrument of communication." "So inseparable indeed," continues he, "are mind and speech, so identically one are thought and language, that although we must always hold reason as the greatest characteristic and peculiar attribute of man; yet language, when we regard its original object and intrinsic dignity is well entitled to be considered as a component part of the intellectual structure of our being!"

With respect to the origin of language we need say but little.— It seems to have been the natural result of an exertion of those faculties with which man is endowed. The first account we have of the application of names, is when GOD caused the various species of the animal creation to come to Adam to see what he would call them. There appears in this case to have been no dictation on the part of the DEITY; for it is expressly stated, that this opportunity was granted to Adam that HE might see what he would call them: thus leaving him perfectly at liberty to exercise his own powers at making language.



Here it might be remarked, that this exercise was given to man before he had a companion to converse with ; for Eve was not yet created. May we not thence infer, that words are useful to man, not only as a social being, but also as a solitary individual.— This observation, however, has stronger evidence of its truth than is afforded by this circumstance ; and which we shall notice presently.

Without wasting much time with useless inquiries, whether language in its origin, consisted of monosyllables or polysyllables, or many other equally unimportant investigations, we shall proceed to notice the manner in which it influences and invigorates the intellectual faculties.

The beneficial effects of words on the human understanding, are particularly evident in the manner in which they improve the powers of *attention, memory, judgment and reasoning.*

By *attention* may be understood that faculty by which the *mind* can direct and confine itself to the consideration of an individual subject, examine its inherent properties, and trace out all its relations with surrounding objects. It is much strengthened by exercise and is the source of all *correct* knowledge ; whether that be derived *immediately* through the organs of sense, or by a reflective act of the mind on its previously acquired stores. It may be called the vital power of the intellectual functions, the main spring of the machinery of the mind. Whatever therefore in a system of education tends to debilitate this principle must of necessity enfeeble all the other mental powers and their operations. In the same proportion as we possess a vigorous command of this faculty so will our perceptions be clear and our observations accurate. Its perfection consists in the ability to fix it steadily on any point of enquiry. It is imperfect of course in proportion as it is unsteady ; and we may add, that there is nothing which is a greater barrier to our progress in knowledge than an incessant diversion of our attention from one object to another. Of this we have a very striking example in the case of a child before it can speak, or understand rightly what is said to it. Its attention is ever veering, and its knowledge is then extremely limited. But so soon as it is able to use words, it acquires such a fixity of attention to its own ideas, and the objects represented by words, that it astonishes us with the im-

mense acquisitions it makes, during the first year after it begins to talk.

Words oblige the mind to fix itself and to proceed more regularly and more slowly, than it possibly could without them ; and this regularity and slowness ensure the speediest progress. Language in this sense may be called a bridle to the roving mind ; and it is on this account that words may be useful to man as a solitary being as well as a member of society. By these two or three remarks, we are enabled, without further comment, to perceive the mode in which the use of words trains the faculty of attention.

Before noticing the influence of language on the memory, we will define it to be that power of the mind by which we are capable of retaining our perceptions, or of resuscitating them at will. This faculty is stronger or weaker in proportion as it is capable of bringing forward many or few ideas, or as these are correct or incorrect, distinct or confused. It is dependent on the power of attention as well for its accuracy as for its vigor.

The memory can be improved to an astonishing extent, and this chiefly by the effect which repetition has in commanding renewed attention to the same ideas, and thus making a more permanent impression. Here words begin to assume their true office, and become in reality the instruments by which the mind carries on its thinking process. We would not, with some metaphysicians, go so far as to say, that we cannot think without words ; but we feel ourselves authorized in asserting, that they are the memorandums of our ideas, and are absolutely necessary to us for retaining the greater portion of our thoughts. By means of language, we can tie down to a word, an idea, which can at any time be recalled, and which otherwise would be as evanescent as our breath.—How many ideas lie dormant in the mind until brought into active existence by words !—A traveller may pass through a country abounding with all the beauties of nature and art, and yet find that his reminiscences are very faint until he has clothed them in language. Immediately they assume a permanence of which he was not before aware ! How frequently does the poet in describing the most familiar scenes in the natural or moral world, please and surprise us by simply individualizing and identifying all our previous ideas by words ! It cannot be said that he gives us a single new image, but he really

presents us with another sight of the same pleasing objects. The attention is again directed to them, and the remembrance of them becomes more perfect and agreeable.

By judgment, we mean that faculty by which we perceive the resemblances and differences among our thoughts.—In order to judge rightly of things which are subjected to our senses we need only possess a proper command of attention. But to form correct judgments on subjects which are not under our immediate observation, we need accuracy of memory as well as fixity of attention. Here is seen the great value of these two fundamental faculties of the mind. We have already seen that they are very much improved by language, and it may be inferred that our judgment is necessarily improved by the same means. Words being the representatives of our ideas, precision and propriety in the use of them must of course imply a similar precision and discrimination among our thoughts. Therefore an attention to the true meaning of our terms must tend to improve our judgment. In examining, for instance, the difference or similarity of signification of two words, we are obliged to attach certain ideas to the one and separate certain ideas from the other. This is then an exercise of judgment implicating both attention and memory. Thus language, as we advance in a knowledge of it, affords one of the best means of strengthening this valuable power of the human understanding. The judgment is one of the first best gifts of heaven to man. It forms the various links of which reasoning is the chain—a chain, which, considered either as a whole or in its various parts, owes its strength to the mysterious agency of words. Reasoning may be said to be a train of judgments; the subsequent ones depending on their antecedents for their correctness and value. What was true in speaking of the judgment will hold good with regard to reasoning. The capability to reason well must depend on the number and accuracy of the discriminations we make among our ideas. Precision then in the definition of our terms is a necessary pre-requisite to good reasoning. This is exemplified in the correctness of mathematical reasonings. Here every word has a definite meaning, and by this means prevents misapprehension or prevarication.—In speaking on the subject of precision in the use of words, Condillac goes so far as to say, that a correct language and good reasoning are inseparably connected. A

proper study of language, therefore, by leading us to examine into the true meaning and right application of terms, will furnish a fund, from which we may draw, as occasion may require, for conducting all the various investigations in which we may be engaged.

It may be objected to our setting so high a value on words as an aid to the rational faculty, that we meet with a great many instances of persons, who are very full of words, and are at the same time miserable reasoners. This objection is more specious than solid ; for when we examine into the minds of this class of persons, we find that they ought rather to be considered as possessing great volubility, than as having a competent stock of *worded* ideas. Their words are used in a confused manner without being distinctly limited in their signification. This is a consequence of a defect in their education, in which the faculty of attention has never been properly trained ; but has been left the fettered slave of a frolicsome imagination. We think we are now justified in concluding, that all the powers of the mind are very much improved by the influence of correct language. That the attention becomes more capable of fixing itself, that the memory, as a matter of course, is rendered stronger and more retentive ; that the judgment and rational faculty are all invigorated by the use of precise and well defined terms.

Having thus briefly and imperfectly stated the manner in which we conceive that words strengthen the human understanding, we shall next proceed to make a few observations on the different species of language, and then hasten to the practical part of our essay.

One division of language may be into oral and written, and another into common language and terminology, or the terms employed in the arrangements and reasonings of the different sciences.

Oral language is of every day use and indispensable to man as a social being. By its means the infant mind is first trained to order and thinking. It is peculiarly adapted to early education ; and children until they are six years of age, should be taught *entirely* by *oral* instruction.

But, however valuable oral language may be, we find that nations who have gone no farther than the use of *audible* signs of their ideas, have never made any great advances in civilization. Hence



the art of representing our thoughts by *visible* signs may indeed be called "the greatest and most important discovery of human ingenuity." The art of writing has this great advantage over oral language, that it is not confined by time nor space. By its instrumentality Moses and David, Newton and Locke, though dead, can yet speak, and improve and refine our souls by their sublime views of the moral, the physical or the intellectual world. Through its means we can concentrate into the narrow compass of a library all the accumulated wisdom of ages, and hold sweet converse with the departed worthies of consecrated antiquity.—Oral language serves the present purpose and the present time, and perishes in the using : But written language gives to the "airy beings of our minds not only a name but a local habitation." But we will turn these remarks to practical account by observing, that the acquisition of the habit of committing our thoughts to paper must then be a matter of the greatest importance to civilized man, and ought to be the paramount object of a school education. The pen has still a greater tendency to regulate the mental powers than oral language, by the slowness and order which it obliges us to pursue in combining our ideas. Our judgments are the result of a longer attention to the objects under consideration, and consequently will be more likely to be true. Beside the regularity which the practice of composition introduces into the mind, there is an additional reason for making it an early part of a scholastic course ; and that is, if it is not commenced before the age of twelve or fifteen it will be much more difficult to acquire the art of penning our thoughts afterwards. The reason of this will be obvious when we reflect that no two actions can be performed at one and the same time, unless they have been long rendered easy by previously established habit.—The habit of *thinking and speaking at once*, commences in the first efforts of the little prattler to lisp his words : But the habit of *thinking and writing at the same time*, is acquired by very few indeed, so as to be performed with facility and freedom from constraint. This obtains so generally, only because children are not early taught to put their ideas on paper, so as to think as well with their pens as with their tongues ; and in after life they are scarcely ever able to form the habit.

We have known persons who could dictate a letter to another with ease, but the moment they would attempt to associate the *motion of their pens* with the *process of their thoughts*, all their arrangements became confused, and they were incapable of effecting their intentions at all to their satisfaction.

May we not hence explain how it has happened, that many men of great natural genius, and inventive-powers, have not left behind them any *written* traces of their superiority to the common herd of mankind. They may have laboured under the magic spell of this mysterious embarrassment. We also frequently see a man, who in the pulpit, or at the bar, shall bear his willing hearers' souls along with him; who shall please, as well by the propriety of his arrangement, as by the elegance of his diction and the sublimity of his figures; and yet this man shall not be able to *pen* any one of his fine orations so as to please, either himself or his most flattering admirers.—Viewed in the light in which these circumstances place it, the practice of composition, as a school exercise, assumes an importance, which makes it rank highest on the scale of the habits acquired under an instructor.—But to proceed.

Our other division of language was into *common* and *technical*. By the common language may be understood the words in daily use on the miscellaneous topics which occupy the attention of mankind. This portion of language is most used, and therefore most necessary; but its frequent use does not invalidate the high estimate we should set on *terminology*, or the nomenclatures adopted in the various sciences. Terminology has been the result of the advance of science from vagueness to accuracy, and from the poverty of its infancy to the riches and abundance of its mature age. It is the bond which gives scientific research its stability and consistency, and preserves in their proper places the various additions of successive ages.

With respect to technical language we have considerable advantage over the ancients. Ours is more definite as well as more extensive, and is rapidly progressing in its growth. To keep up with the progress of science we must know its terms. Since it is fortunately becoming fashionable to make science tributary to the comfort of common life and the happiness of mankind, we are decidedly of opinion, that terminology should be as generally taught as common



language. This would afford a key to the youthful mind by which it might have access to the varied stores of knowledge.\*

We next come to treat of the causes which have retarded intellectual improvement, and to notice the means that might be substituted in order to advance the art of education to its proper dignity, as the most noble of all human professions.† We might enumerate a great many defects and evils existing in the common mode of teaching; among which are the number of classes learning different things, the long and debilitating confinement of the scholars dur-

\* On the subject of terminology our English dictionaries are extremely defective. We shall in vain look even in Johnson's quarto work for some of the most common scientific terms, used in the improved state of modern science. The reason usually offered by lexicographers for not inserting technical terms is, that the nomenclatures of some of the sciences are liable to frequent changes, and ought therefore (say they) not to be adopted as a legitimate portion of our language. We admit that nomenclatures are variable; but ought we not to have them explained in our dictionaries, at least so long as we make use of them in our scientific and miscellaneous publications. If they should not be taken into the body of the work, they might be attached by way of an appendix to the end of our dictionaries. Disappointment and chagrin will attend the search of a pupil in looking for the meaning of our elegant chemical terms in our largest dictionaries; and thousands of words, though they have been in use for near a century in the various branches of natural history, are not to be met with, unless we look for them in glossaries appropriated to geology, mineralogy, botany, and animated nature. Webster's compendious dictionary is in a great measure an exception to this censure; but it is too small to be satisfactory; still, small as it is, it contains more words and better definitions than any dictionary yet published.—An extensive and complete dictionary of the English language is still a desideratum. It is to be hoped that Mr. Webster will shortly give to the world his long promised work to fill up the unoccupied space in English literature.

† The profession of teaching, next to the ministry, is doubtless the most noble and respectable of all the professions. But in the present day it has become very much degraded through the ignorance and parsimony of the community. Men of talents are not inclined to remain in the employment of teaching than circumstances may require it. Sufficient encouragement is not given to retain them, and as numerous situations of a more lucrative kind offer themselves, they will abandon this occupation for one intrinsically less respectable.—Their place must then be supplied by inexperienced and ignorant persons, who have perhaps no better reason to give for offering themselves as instructors of youth, than that *they are disabled from following any other trade for a living*. They are accepted and employed, and of this class we find a great number of the teachers of our country schools; and these have degraded the profession in many parts of our country to that *negative* state which is worse than nothing. Their motives in wishing to support themselves by their own industry are certainly laudable: but would it not be the interest of the public rather to *pay* them for *not teaching*, or support them in some other way, than to have the intellects of our children seriously injured, if not entirely ruined, by their *unskilful* though *well intended* endeavours to instruct them.

ing the day, the teaching subjects incomprehensible to their minds, &c. &c. &c. But the evil of greatest magnitude, in our opinion, is *the defective manner in which the English language is taught.*

Our language is generally taught in such a way as to *establish* a habit of *reading without thinking*, when this habit is confirmed (which is very soon the case) the pupil will pass his eyes over and pronounce a number of paragraphs in a book, without there being awakened in his mind *one* idea in a *hundred* intended to be conveyed by the words. That this is the fact every person of the least reflection must acknowledge.—The question then only remains, *how is this monstrous and pernicious habit acquired?* a question of such weight as to merit a serious consideration.

At the threshold of our answer to this enquiry, we shall lay it down as an axiom, that *all our permanent habits whether intellectual or moral, owe their origin to our early impressions and exercises.*—This is a standard truth, and admonishes us to be careful to *begin* well if we wish to *go on* well. “Train up a child” said a wise man “in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”—Of all our schools those for *small* children should be conducted by the most competent teachers; who should be generously encouraged and handsomely remunerated. This however is far from being the case; and the present mode of domestic education, either in a moral or intellectual point of view, is also very defective, and forms a miserable introduction to the scholastic course. Much of this is at present unavoidable, since many parents are unfortunately ignorant of every parental duty, but that of feeding and clothing their children. Should not such parents live under a government controlled by the laws of Lycurgus, and deliver up their offspring to be brought up by its parental hand? \* But to return to our question.

---

\* Throughout the world we too generally find poverty connected with the most debasing ignorance. In very few countries indeed, do we observe the lower orders of society, raised many degrees above the level of the savage in intellectual cultivation. Scotland, the north of Ireland, the New England states, the state of New York, and some other portions of our country can boast of the greatest efforts towards the instruction of the poor. More recently than the *three* first mentioned, England, the principalities of Germany, Switzerland, Russia and France, have made some exertions toward the same object. The vast advantages, which arise from having the lower classes well educated, may be seen by adverting to any of those countries where they are furnished with even a moderate share of information. The

Let us notice what is done in the initiatory course of a child just transferred from the company of an ignorant nurse to the care of an Abecedarian.—We find him put into a *spelling book*!! yes, we repeat it with regret, *he is put into a spelling book*!! O! tell it not to posterity! publish it not to future generations, lest they express an irreverent smile at the ignorance of their ancestors for us—

benefits that have resulted from the partial and insulated influence of Lancasterian and Sunday schools, must strike every statesman and friend of mankind with the most pleasing emotions, and force conviction on the minds of the most obstinate of the necessity of educating all the poor on a liberal scale.

What an immense quantum of intellect lies dormant, or is brought into exercise, only to be a curse to society, merely from the want of those facilities of instruction which should be afforded to the indigent! The children of the poor grow up in idleness and vice, because their parents can find no employment for them until they are twelve or fourteen years of age. By this time their moral and intellectual habits are pretty well formed, and it is nothing but some peculiar circumstances, in which some may be placed that will ever make them good citizens. It is painful to reflect, how great a loss the public sustains from this cause.—What happy consequences would ensue from giving a proper direction to all the mental energies of these children!

It may be said that provision is made in this state (Pennsylvania) for their education. This is done to a certain extent; but the provision becomes inefficient through some circumstances attending it. Many persons who are too poor to send their children to school, will not give them in to the assessor to be put on the *poor* list. This is perhaps an improper pride; but as we see most men actuated more by their moral feelings than sober reason, so we see in this case, that parents will defraud their children of learning, and the community of well informed citizens, from a fear of feeling more acutely their degraded condition. Poverty is too much a disgrace, and the reproach of being a charity scholar is severely felt by the children, and will easily make them and their parents forego all the advantages of education, when purchased at the expense of honorable feeling.

Some other regulation would appear then to be necessary in order to accomplish the instruction of every poor child. This could best be done by laying a school tax so as to create a fund for the payment of teaching. Teachers should receive nothing for their services from the parents of children. The rich and the poor would then be on equal footing, with respect to education; and the latter ought by all means to be as well educated as the former. It is a duty which the government owes to them; and the performance of that duty would be repaid by tenfold interest. There would be more saved to the public in the diminution of criminal prosecutions than would educate every indigent child in the state. Along with this our lives and property would be more secure, and we should have, besides, an accession to the number of good and enlightened members of society.—The records of the Lancasterian and Sunday schools furnish scarcely any instances of children who have been brought up under their care, ever having been charged as criminals before a court of justice. This fact then should urge every legislature to exert their power in establishing a regular and general system of education. The results that would follow a measure of this kind in the next thirty years, would be such as to rejoice the heart of every philanthropist.

ing so irrational a means of "teaching the young idea how to shoot."—And what is a spelling book? A spelling book may be defined to be a work designed to teach children the *visible* representation of all the words constituting our *oral* language, without the least regard to the ideas intended to be associated with these *visible* signs. In this book children are kept for a year or more, spelling thousands of words (if we dare call that a *word* which is not understood) which they never heard of before. A continuance of these exercises renders their powers of attention, association and memory so torpid, that they will spell even the most familiar combinations of letters, such as *cat*, *dog*, *cake*, and *not think* of either a cat, a dog, or a cake.

If it is a true maxim that all knowledge must consist of ideas; and that unless we convey ideas we communicate no knowledge; what can be said of a plan of teaching that makes no higher pretensions than that it teaches the shape and colour of letters; that supplies no other ideas than the black marks of the printer's ink.\* The combinations of these letters are as perfect mysteries to the child as were the secret symbols of the Egyptian hieroglyphics to the "*profane vulgar*." We are sorry that this is almost universally true, and we blush, when we behold the degraded stupefaction superinduced on all the mental faculties by this absurd mode of teaching. Were St. Paul living, we feel assured, that he would unite with us in opposing such a system of instruction, for he says, "I would rather speak *five words* with the understanding than *ten thousand* in an unknown tongue."

After the spelling course come the reading exercises, and here

---

\* The difference between *oral* and *printed* or *written* language is so great as to constitute them two distinct languages. The one may be called the language of the *eye*, the other the language of the *ear*. These two should be so completely united in one act, that the sound or *oral* word shall bring before the imagination the *written* or *printed* word; and also the *idea* for which both the *oral* and *written* words stand; and so vice versa. Unless this point is attended to in the first lessons given to a child, as well as through a whole course of teaching, obscurity will only become more obscure. In the spelling book this principle is not acted on, and consequently everlasting clouds and darkness hang over the minds of children. So much attention is requisite to name the individual letters in a word, (commonly called spelling) that the child is unable to recollect to mind the *meaning* conveyed by the *sound* of those *letters*. And at this business of spelling, the poor creature is kept so long, that habit may forever afterwards prevent his mind from taking a rational course.



we see the bad consequences of previous habits. The child reads like a stupid automaton, the mind having no other concern in the affair than to direct the vocal organs in the enunciation of a series of sounds. Even when the lesson is on a level with the capacity of the child, it will require the most laborious and incessant reiteration to confine his attention to the connection of thought. But what are we to expect, when his lessons are above the level of his mind?—nothing but that dullness should become more dull. It is unfortunately true that most reading books for children are of this cast, and fit only for a mature mind to comprehend. What an absurdity to set a child of seven or eight years of age to reading extracts from the elaborate essays of Johnson, Addison, Blair, &c. By this practice the habit of reading without thinking, will be lastingly rivetted.\*

Some accidental circumstances not unfrequently occur which may tend to rouse a scholar from the mental torpor induced by this course of instruction. He may in after life get into some active situation, which will force him to bend his attention to the meaning

---

\* The selections of reading lessons in general use, are not suited to the capacities of children under the age of twelve or fourteen years. Both the subjects and the language are much above their comprehension. Murray's reading books indicate much taste and piety in the choice of the lessons; but they are no more calculated for the comprehension of children, (as they are at present taught) than the armour of Saul was for the stripling David.—Mr. Murray has done much for the youth of our time, and deserves their warmest thanks; but his reading selection, are, to use a cant phrase, *too good* for children. The reading lessons in his spelling book are an exception to this remark. There is none of his works, in which he has displayed more judgment than in the composition and choice of the reading exercises in that little work. They are excellent both in matter and manner.

But there is no school book that forms a gradation between those lessons and the elevated range of his other reading books. The works of Mrs. Barbauld, Mrs. Frimmer, Dr. Aikin and Miss Edgeworth, might probably fill up the chasm. They have all learned to *think like children*, but, excepting Mrs. Barbauld, not yet to speak and write in the style of children.—Their style for the most part overshoots the limits of a child's vocabulary.

Mr. Murray's spelling book is the only one that has the semblance of being *designed* for children. It is surprising that he did not see the absurdity of introducing *spelling* lessons, without intending the words contained in them to be defined and explained by the teacher. Had he adopted an arrangement suited to this end, and extended his series of interesting reading lessons, he would have introduced a new era in the art of teaching. Such a work is at present a desideratum.

of words. He may be obliged to hold mercantile or other correspondence with several persons. This will bring him to think with his pen, and lead his mind to know the force of words. The most happy remedy however for his disease that he can meet with, is to be put to the study of some foreign language. This will oblige him to unite reading and thinking, more especially if he makes *written* translations. It is on this account chiefly, that the study of the Latin language is of such great use. Indeed so long as spelling books form the first step in our instructions, we conceive the study of some foreign language to be quite indispensable ; and the Latin is perhaps better calculated than any other, for commanding the sluggish attention of victims to the spelling book system.\*

But should the scholar not meet with these advantages, and grow to manhood with his load of evil habits pressing him, he will exhibit one of the thousand instances that surround us, of a man whose mind is quite unfledged ; who has a distaste for every intellectual enjoyment ; to whom a book is an annoyance, because the eyes of his mind were rendered blind by looking at signs instead of seeing the *things signified* ; who when he reads, cannot infuse into his enunciation the soul and tone of a *thinking* being, but, pardon the expression reader, effects little more than the humdrum monotony of a hand-organ.

We hope we may now be permitted to conclude that the usual plan of teaching to read without thought, has its origin in the use of the *spelling book* ; and that *this is the greatest barrier now existing to intellectual improvement* : That “ the great reason,” as a sensible, though sarcastic writer (Neef) observes, “ why men in general are so ignorant, is, that they were taught by this mechanical method,” a method, we would add, which like the destructive mildew has blasted the just unfolding germs of many a rising genius.

---

\* But if a youth is put at the study of Latin, a great deal of time will still be lost : First, on account of his previous habits of inattention ; and secondly, from his ignorance of his own language : for when he shall look for a word in his Latin dictionary, he will often find it explained by English words, which are as little understood by him as the Latin was. This proves a source of discouragement to him, and tends very much to retard his progress.



A question of the following kind may now be started, "If the spelling book be given up, what is then to be done?" The answer is simply this, that a method of teaching should be introduced, which possessing none of the disadvantages animadverted on, includes in itself the means of improving all the faculties of the human understanding. The outlines of such a method we shall make a feeble effort to pourtray.

Domestic or preparatory education should as before stated, be conducted by *oral* instruction. The innocent inmate of the nursery should not be harrassed with a horn book, by which to learn his alphabet. Rather let his attention be fixed on objects that meet his senses; let him be taught the sensible properties of things that engage his attention. This will give him an intellectual hold on the surrounding universe, and his mind, by employing the lever of language will daily gain new strength. Let him be taught the names of all the parts of an individual object, and as much as possible its history and the uses to which it may be applied.

But his knowledge should for some time be confined chiefly to notices derived directly through his sensations, which may be denominated positive knowledge; and let his knowledge of relations as well as abstract ideas be left untouched until he shall be able to apprehend them. The reason why relative knowledge should be left to succeed positive, is that the former is dependent on the latter; for the knowledge of relations cannot be acquired until the knowledge of objects is familiar. Besides a knowledge of the sensible properties of things may be acquired as readily at the age of five years as at any future period.

By pursuing a course of this kind, a child would possess qualifications for entering school at the age of six or seven years, of a very different character from what we generally meet with. He would have been taught to *think* and to bind his volatile ideas to appropriate words. His subsequent progress would be rapid and agreeable.

Such a method is not so difficult to put into effectual operation as some may think; for it could be pursued by any mother of good

common sense. 'There is no reason to go far for subjects. A chair, or a table, a peach or an apple, a cup or a saucer, a bean or a pebble, would form ample subjects to interest and instruct a child of four years of age.\* But lest all this may be considered a digression

---

\* When we reflect on the condition of women and their relation to society, we cannot help perceiving the immense influence they possess and exert in all civilized nations. "Men make laws, but women make manners," has long ago become an adage; and if it is true that laws are ineffectual, where the manners and customs of a people are opposed to them, we shall see the high value we should set on female education. We feel no hesitation in hazarding the opinion, that, of all human beings, the female sex ought to be the best educated. This would secure the morals of society and ensure a race of enlightened and virtuous citizens.

The first years of children are spent under the eye and in the company of their mothers. Boys until they are ten or twelve years old, and girls until they marry, may be said to be under the management of their mothers.—How necessary is it therefore that the minds of women should be well cultivated; especially when we recollect that early impressions and habits, whether moral or intellectual are hardly ever effaced. If mothers are wise and prudent, their children will in general be the same. It has been remarked by persons of the greatest observation, that most men who have been eminent for learning and piety have owed the germs of that eminence to their mothers. *Men* are but *children* of a *larger growth*, and our dispositions and habits in after life are nothing more than the developement of those principles which were imbibed during our tender years. How important that these should be correct! With these observations as general points, we will notice some of the branches of study that might employ the attention of females.

An accurate knowledge of their own language, ought to be an object of primary attention in the instruction of females. By this we are far from meaning the mere *mechanical* knowledge of the principles of grammar and their application; but a *thorough* knowledge of the meaning of every English word, and a critical acquaintance with the shades of difference in the signification of our synonymous terms. To this should be added the ability, from frequent exercise, of expressing themselves well in written composition. They should also be well acquainted with the principles of arithmetic on Pestalozzi's simple and excellent plan. This would enable them to teach their children, with very little trouble all the principal doctrines of numbers.

Natural history in its most extensive sense, will form a very useful and instructive branch of female study. Geography and general history are also very necessary. Natural philosophy and chemistry, should claim a share of attention. They would furnish many subjects of reflection, and cultivate the reasoning powers. But above all the doctrines of morals as examined in works on natural theology and moral philosophy, and displayed in the sacred scriptures, should constitute the points of the most careful investigation. With these should be connected the evidences of the truth of the christian religion.

As to a knowledge of other languages than their own, we are not of the opinion of Milton, that "one tongue is enough for a *woman*;" but we think where there is *time*, the acquisition of some foreign language may be very useful. It will extend the field of knowledge and give variety to the objects of enquiry. The French and Latin would answer this purpose best.

instead of an introduction to our school course, we will proceed to that part of our essay.

A school on our plan should have only one class to each teacher, and the pupils in each class should be as

---

With regard to geometry and practical mathematics, we think, young ladies ought *at least* to be *well* acquainted with Euclid's elements and arithmetic. They should study Euclid's elements, not as some might suppose, for the purpose of ostentation; but for the same reason that Locke would have young gentlemen to study them, namely "for the purpose of making them rational beings." No person ever went through Euclid understandingly, who did not become a better reasoner by it. We would therefore give a young lady a knowledge of geometry, because it will be useful to her; though nobody should ever know her to be a Euclidian.

Let us now examine some of the uses to which women could apply such a stock of acquirements as the preceding. Omitting the mention of the numerous benefits derived to themselves from the possession of a well cultivated mind, we would notice more particularly the advantages that society would derive from them.

A proper plan of domestic education might then be instituted and put into practice. Children could be taught by their mothers at the rate of one or two hours a day, *twice as much* as they learn at our common schools.—The demoralizing influence of associating with the promiscuous groups of our common schools, might thus be obviated.

This is an evil which has been observed by most parents that are solicitous for the welfare of their children. Here the innocent and the good are mixed with those who are already acquainted with the vices of the world. The spelling and other books used at school can afford them little or no entertainment, because they are not understood. The conversation of their playmates becomes therefore, the centre of attraction, to which all their feelings tend. And this conversation is not of a cast that will improve their morals or their understanding.—The word that dismisses school is the most grateful sound that meets the scholars ears; and the call to their books is disagreeable to all, and so disgusting to some, that they will even risk the consequences of playing truant, to avoid learning what they do *not understand* and what consequently *cannot interest* them. If their books were understood by them, reading would in most instances be preferred to bad company. But on the present mode of learning nothing but words without meanings, it is scarcely possible for a child to love to go to school. Indeed, we might very reasonably express our wonder if we saw it otherwise. Hence it also happens, that, to command attention, teachers must have recourse to so many modes of punishment which might have been prevented, by avoiding the cause.

Should female education once be put upon a liberal footing, the whole face of society would be greatly changed for the better in the course of the next fifty years. Women would then delight in "teaching the young idea how to shoot;" and the expense of most of our common schools might be saved. Our ladies would then be capable at a small expenditure of time to qualify their sons for the lower classes of our academies and colleges; and to give to their daughters all the qualifications requisite for making them as useful in their turn as their mothers have been.



nearly as possible of one age.\* They should all be employed at the same time at one and the same course of studies. They should not be confined in school so long at any time, as to fatigue their attention. Whenever real listlessness would appear they should have an intermission to be occupied in some way that might interest them. Our *chief* object for the first two or three years would be the acquisition of the English language and the art of expressing ourselves in *written* composition. Other subjects should be pursued collaterally, such as arithmetic on Pestalozzi's plan, the nomenclature and simplest reasonings of geometry, &c. &c. But the

---

\* To accomplish this object would be difficult in country places, but might be effected in towns and boarding establishments. The advantages would be very great.

The time that is wasted, and worse than wasted in our common schools, is always in the ratio of the number of classes to one teacher. Say for instance, that there are six classes in a school, which is held during six hours of the day. Every child can then only receive one sixth part of the teacher's attention, that is to say one hour per day. The rest of his time he is either idle, or learning erroneously by himself; or else worse than idle, promoting mischief among his companions. This is a correct statement of facts as they exist; and the consequences can be told by every thinking mind.

By the arrangement of one class to each teacher the whole six hours could be usefully occupied in acquiring knowledge. Certain intervals should be allowed for recreation; as it is impossible for a child to be long confined without injuring its mind and body. Dulness and ill health are both concomitants of the long confinement prevalent in our schools. *Mens sana in corpore sano*, (a sound mind in a sound body,) is a maxim as true as it is ancient, and enforces on us the importance of attention to the health of children during their school course. The lessons should therefore continue for the space of an hour or more; and then an intermission of half an hour or less might be allowed for useful and scientific recreation. After this relaxation the pupils would return to their studies with renewed delight; and thus no circumstances would exist tending to induce either bodily or mental debility.

A method might be likewise devised by which our country schools could approximate this arrangement, by adopting something like the plan proposed by Miss Edgeworth, of having the pupils of a country school divided into large classes, and appointing particular portions of the day for each class to come to school. Say there are thirty scholars in a school, divided into classes of ten each. One class might come at eight or nine o'clock A. M. and remain a few hours. After receiving the exclusive attention of the teacher for two hours they might return home and the next class would occupy their place for a few hours, who should be succeeded by the third class. There is no doubt that much more knowledge could be acquired in this way, than on the usual plan of *incarceration* for the *whole* day; and the evils of confinement and moral deterioration might be very much avoided, because the children would again be under the eyes of their parents.

motto that would direct this part of our course would be "that nobody has been taught any branch of knowledge *well*, who is not able to express his views correctly in a written essay on it."

After becoming acquainted with the alphabet and the manner of forming the letters on a slate, we should follow the plan pursued in the oral course, but advance to points untouched in that. We would first write down the simplest words and after *ascertaining well their meaning*, make short phrases on them, exemplifying their use. Not a *single word* should be brought under the notice of the pupil which he would not be made *fully to understand*. We should at first keep almost exclusively to words denoting *material* objects and their qualities. We should then gradually introduce other terms, and write phrases on them in the same way; and thus proceed through the whole language. These exercises would perhaps occupy two or three years; from the age of six or seven to nine or ten.

This course of phrases could be made the vehicle of a great number of facts and principles in natural history, the sciences and the arts. Our phrases would also become the subjects of a great variety of comments forming a series of exercises of the following kind. [The reader will observe here that we are indebted for some of these exercises to a sketch of a system of education by J. Neef.]

At first the pupils should confine themselves to noticing the properties of the things signified by the words in a phrase; as for example in the sentence *a stone sinks in water*: observe the qualities of a stone and of water. The reason why it sinks should be left for a more advanced part of our course.

For an evening exercise they should write from memory as much of their previous day's work as they could remember, and have it revised and corrected the ensuing morning. This would improve their memory, and produce a habit of uniting in one act *thinking and writing*. It would also teach them orthography in the only perfect way in which it can be taught.

We might next add to the above exercise the practice of naming all the parts of any thing mentioned in a sentence; e. g. *I have a shoe on my foot*. Here the shoe would be found to consist of parts

called the *vamp*, the *quarters*, the *sole*, &c. , and the foot of the *heel*, *sole*, *toes*, *instep*, &c. Again in the phrase *I saw a flower in the garden* ; the flower might be analysed into the *calyx* or *flower cup*, the *carolla* or *flower-leaves*, the *stamens*, or *chives* and the *pistil* or *pointal*. Simple as this may appear, its effects will be very valuable. It will not only greatly increase their stock of words *with ideas attached to them*, but will also teach them the first elements of arrangement in composition. And we all know that to be able to classify our ideas and bring them to a certain order under different heads is a great acquirement.

Their evening exercises should still be continued as before and if they were disposed and able to make phrases of their own, so much the better. It is likely however that they would as yet, not attempt this ; for it is a maxim that man must first imitate before he can originate.

In addition to the last praxis, we would now introduce another, which should consist in comparing different objects mentioned in a phrase, e. g. *A dog eats flesh and a cow eats grass*. Here all the points of difference and resemblance between a dog and a cow should be minutely noticed, both as to their appearance and habits. This will afford an excellent exercise for strengthening the judgment, and with it the powers of attention, or observation and memory.—It will also be a great source of relative knowledge, which forms the most extensive portion of our scientific acquirements.

Their attention should next be drawn to notice the uses of things and what can be made of them ; or if an organ of some plant or animal, to learn its functions. Thus the word *iron* occurring in a phrase, would lead us to examine its various uses. So the words *leaf*, *liver*, *heart*, *lungs*, should induce us to ascertain that the *leaf* performs the office of a respiratory organ to the *plant* as the *lungs* do to an animal ; that the *liver* secretes *bile*, and that the *heart* is a muscular machine, which forces the *blood* by means of the *arteries* to every part of the body.—It need scarcely be observed that this praxis will produce an immense gain of useful and scientific information.



When we should have progressed for some time in this sort of inquiries, the evening lessons of the pupils would no doubt begin to assume some originality. Their funds augmenting, they would be able to bring from their treasures "things new as well as old."—These independent efforts will invigorate their minds, while the pleasure of originating something of their own, will stimulate exertion, and the march of mind will be marked by a firm and steadily progressive step. They will become conscious of their own powers and feel delighted with the exercise of them. They will be daily more and more able to associate their thoughts with their pens as well as with their tongues.

After some time we should add another mode of arresting attention to the words in a phrase, and that would be to classify every word that is capable of it, under that science or branch of science in which we may find a history of it. This we shall take the liberty of calling the art of parsing words into their sciences. Thus *dog*, *horse*, *gnat*, should be transferred to zoology, as the department which gives them their general arrangement. The *gnat* would afterwards be found to come under another division denominated entomology : To this branch would be referred such words as *larva*, *aurelia*, *chrysalis*, &c. as forming a part of its terminology. Horse and dog would be placed under *mammalia* or quadrupeds.—The words *limestone*, *gypsum*, *water*, *diamond* will be referred to mineralogy for their classification, and to chemistry for an analysis of their properties. To this latter science the terms *oxydation*, *combustion*, *fermentation*, *chrySTALLIZATION*, &c. will also be placed under it, as constituting a part of its nomenclature. The words *bone*, *muscles*, *heart*, *brain*, &c. will come under anatomy for a description of them, and under physiology for an account of their functions. *Mountain*, *rock*, *river*, *quarry*, *mine*, *pebble*, &c. &c. will be referred to geology for scientific conjectures respecting their formation, connections &c. So *plant*, *grass*, *apple*, *pear*, *peach*, *cabbage*, *potatoc*, *wheat*, &c. will come under botany as the branch of natural history which gives them their proper *class*, *order*, *genus*, &c. In this manner all the various divisions of physical and metaphysical science shall have their subjects and their terms identified. Various modes of classifying animals and vegetables should be pursued ; but

the classification of Linnaeus as being the most generally used should be especially attended to. The arrangements of Cuvier in the animal, and Jussieu in the vegetable kingdom, would form an agreeable variety, at the same time that they would prevent the pupil from imbibing an *improper* prejudice in favor of any classification, seeing that they must all in many respects be very imperfect.

One advantage accruing from this mode of parsing words into their sciences, will be that our pupil shall be able to tell in what science he may look for the investigation of any subject of enquiry. But this is not all: the plan admits of such an extension as to become a perfect means of ascertaining the general and specific division of every branch of human knowledge. Say the word *insect* is the subject of attention, let him make out a list of all the insects he can readily recollect. If the word *metal*, make a catalogue of them, and arrange them in their orders and genera. Afterwards descend to a more specific course and treat them in the same way.

It may be objected by some, that the knowledge gained in this way would not be deep nor extensive. This objection is plausible, and, in some measure, true. Scholars of eight or ten years of age would not possess as profound views of each science as the adept who had made it for years his study. This is neither intended nor expected to be done. But they will have the keys of knowledge, and will have fully come up to Locke's opinion of this matter, where he says, "that youth should *early* be afforded a *general* view of all the divisions of human knowledge, as well that they may apply themselves to that which may thereafter suit their turn best, as that they may see the connexion and harmony of all the sciences."—But every cavil will vanish, when it is known that all this is merely a preliminary exercise to a course of scientific reading, that is to be prosecuted after our scholars are conducted through the English language.

Our next exercise might be to notice the words of contrary meaning to the one under consideration, and by this means determine its various significations: e. g. *fine* in the phrases "*he is a fine man*," "*she has a fine voice*," "*that is fine flour*." The opposite to *fine* in

the first phrase, is *mean* or *bad* ; to the second is *hoarse* or disagreeable ; and to the third is *coarse* or *rough*.—This little exercise will have its use, since it will give an opportunity for observing the manner in which a word is modified by a literal or metaphorical meaning, and also for noticing the beauty of any particular figure.

Another praxis shall be added to the foregoing, which will be, to examine the synonymous words of our language, and determine the various shades of difference in their meaning. Their use in affording variety of expression, and how the sentence must be changed in its arrangement in order to effect this, will also be attended to. Vagueness in their application must not be allowed ; lest the very copiousness which they give to the language become a serious injury, by exciting misunderstandings among those who use them incorrectly.—A remark or two of Locke's may be suitably introduced here. Speaking of the necessity of understanding the full force of words, he says "the want of a precise signification in their words, when men come to reason, especially on moral matters, is the cause of very obscure and uncertain notions. They use their undetermined words confidently, without much troubling their heads with a fixed meaning ; whereby, besides the ease of it, they obtain this advantage, that as, in such discourses, they are seldom in the right, so they are as seldom to be convinced, that they are in the wrong : it being just the same to go about to draw these persons out of their mistakes, who have no settled notions, as to dispossess a vagrant of his habitation, who has no settled abode. The chief end of language being to be understood, words serve not for that end when they excite not in the mind of the hearer the same idea which they stand for in the mind of the speaker."

In addition to our remarks on variety of expression, we may add that it gives an opportunity for the exercise of discrimination and taste. These habits of mind will be cultivated by separating from each word the ideas of which it is not properly the representative ; and also by examining which is the most perspicuous mode of expressing a sentiment.

Another attempt at awakening interest might be made by bringing forward the practice of ascertaining what is tacitly implied in any word, as some way connected or co-existent with it. E. g.

the word *thunder* necessarily associates with its meaning the additional ideas of *lightning*, *clouds* and *warm weather*. In the word *pump*, we find the probable associations are, that it is in a well, and near a house : But neither of these may be true, and the degree of truth must be measured by what is the most usual condition of things. We shall therefore divide our ideas of association into necessary, and contingent.—When we mention the word *roof*, the imagination immediately sets a building under it ; yet the term may be applied to the same object entirely separate from any building. Still, where there is no direct proof of the contrary, the mind rests satisfied with the highest probability, resulting from the most usual connexion of things.

Such exercises as these may appear trivial to some persons ; but they do not know how much they strengthen the imagination, and at the same time make it pay homage to the judgment as its master. This species of mental exercise is in fact the process of investigation pursued in all those cases where we cannot arrive at mathematical certainty. It has been called analogical reasoning and perhaps correctly.—We read, for instance, that Noah built an ark of Gopher wood of great dimensions ; our imagination guided by judgment may draw a great many curious and highly probable inferences respecting the state of the arts among the antediluvians. Metallic tools were necessary to the construction of such a building ; and the knowledge of various chemical processes is pre-supposed in order to bring any of the metals into a state in which they may be used as instruments.

. This praxis will be of such great value in reference to the reasonings of common life, that we will venture to place it on a level with mathematical researches : and though it does not arrive at the same certainty, yet it gives equal exercise to the powers of memory, judgment and reasoning, with the most accurate course of geometrical or algebraical analysis.

Our next object might be, to examine into the derivation of English words, by finding their roots, and investigating the meaning of prefixes and affixes. This would afford variety for some time, and in many instances give an opportunity of testing the skill and taste of the pupil.



This, or something like it, should constitute the series of exercises, which should be incorporated with our study of the English language. We will however mention some others which shall occupy the various intervals that would occur between the regular lessons of the day. These should be mostly of an active or amusing kind; such as performing easy experiments in natural philosophy and chemistry, the learning the use of the globes, drawing of maps, and making small surveys of surrounding fields, lots, &c. In addition to these, exercises in gardening and some of the mechanic trades should be attended to. Their minds should also be directed to make observations on the infinite variety of objects presented to them in the great museum of nature. They might be required to form small collections in natural history for themselves, and be taught how to analyse and arrange them. Thus the plants of the fields and the woods, the different kinds of clays, stones, &c. that would be met with in their excursions, would all afford subjects of inquiry and improvement.

It is understood that in the whole progress of this school course, when a phrase included any moral sentiment or duty, that it should be especially noticed, and its worth proven by its conformity to the sacred standard of moral truth and reason. The scriptures should not be read *by* our scholars, until they have gone through our course of the English language. Bible truths would be given them *orally*, and there should be daily a portion of this book suited to their understanding read *to* them and such comments made thereon as might seem proper. The highest veneration should ever be exhibited for the authority of this code of laws, referring to, and abiding by its decisions, in all cases of moral conduct.

After understanding our own language well, our next point would be to prosecute a course of English reading, and regular composition. To this point all our previous lessons have been tending, and to the successful accomplishment of this object all the foregoing instructions were designed as preparatory. Here then the antecedent acquirements of the pupil will be brought into action.

Our reading should consist of a series of works on grammar, the different branches of natural history, mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, logic, rhetoric, voyages and travels, civil history,

natural theology, moral and political philosophy, mythology, antiquities and a course of poetical reading. We would then conclude with a series of scripture readings, and the evidences of the christian religion.

The time that would be occupied in accomplishing these studies might probably be three or four years ; from the age of nine or ten to that of thirteen or fourteen.

Compositions should now be punctually required every morning. These should at first be no more than simple descriptions of some article in natural history, or some manufacturing process. Afterwards they should proceed to moral and other subjects, and finally, write essays or treatises on every branch of knowledge they have passed through.—Here then English education would be considered as finished; and they might then very profitably enter on a course of the learned languages, if thought necessary.

The advantages of such a plan of education we believe will be anticipated by every reflecting mind. Our pupils would possess an acquaintance with correct language, and also a considerable mass of scientific acquirements. Study would become their delight.—They would know when language is used rightly, as well as how to use it. This is a great blessing in a moral point of view ; for it is said “by thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.” Miss H. More also very justly remarks, that, “scarcely any one perhaps has an adequate conception how much clear and correct expression favours the elucidation of truth ; and the side of truth is obviously the side of morals : it is in fact one and the same cause, and it is of course the same cause with true religion also.”

How readily will a pupil, trained on this plan, understand and remember all that he reads : His knowledge of words will have removed every obstacle in the way of his understanding, and his memory will become accurate and retentive, because his views will be clear and impressive. Observation likewise will be to him a never failing source of pleasure and profit. His senses of seeing, hearing, &c. will all assume their proper offices, and continually supply his mind with subjects of knowledge and reflection.—To such a scholar the whole creation would be a book. Every object would



awaken some useful hint, and if his mind should have taken a correct moral turn, he would delight in "looking through nature up to nature's GOD."

We fear an idea may have been excited by our remarks that we have proven too much ; that it is not possible that every human being can have his faculties equally cultivated ; and that therefore we have only given a picture of the gifted few.—We grant that mankind are not all equal in mental endowments ; but we have reason to believe that the great *majority* are blessed with superior intellectual powers ; and that all that has prevented these faculties from developing themselves, has been the irrational mode pursued in our *initiatary* schools : and that even the duller portion of the human race, could their thoughts be traced out carefully, and their minds unfolded, would display treasures, which are now concealed from their possessors and lost to society.

We do not lay claim to much originality in our opinions on education ; they may perhaps be properly called *old opinions set in a new light* ; for the most of our notions are either collected from other writers or consist of inferences drawn from their general hints. Many of our remarks however are the result of considerable observation and reflection on the subject of training the youthful mind.

The authors by whom we have been most liberally supplied with materials and hints, are Locke and Condillac, some observations of Dugald Stewart, and chiefly the views of Pestalozzi as given by Neef and others.—These are names that we feel a pleasure in associating with our views. With such able supporters, we are confident that such a method of instruction *must ultimately prevail*. The subject must however frequently be brought before the public, in all its modifications and bearings. The engine of reform must be gradually set in motion, and as skilfully managed in its experimenting efforts, or its progress may be long retarded.

But success will finally attend the endeavours of those, who are investigating the laws of mind, and the method of managing them.—When we of the present generation, oppressed by the prejudices of our ancestors, shall have been borne down the stream of time along with our prejudices, a rational system of education may then become the order of the day.—The present *spelling book* system, the

unlucky invention of ignorant and barbarous times, will then no more paralyse the energies of the youthful mind.

This is not the enthusiastic expectation of a warm fancy, but the sober calculation of moral certainty. Let us but look back at the course of improvement in the arts and sciences, for the last fifty years, and that retrospect will justify our anticipations.—The prophecy of Daniel, that “many shall go to and fro and knowledge shall increase,” has been, and is daily fulfilling. The philosophy of *mind* as well of *matter* is continually progressing in its researches; and it shall progress until the philosophic teacher, shall be able to apply his principles to the *regulation of the thinking process* with much the same certainty as the mechanician applies the laws of motion to the *management of his engines*.—Then will be seen the gigantic march of human intellect, advancing in all its majesty. Then will *mind* assert its true prerogatives, and prove its stupendous superiority over *matter* by subjugating surrounding nature to its control. That knowledge is power, is a maxim even now; but then and then only will the *physical* world fully acknowledge the universal domination of the intellectual!

## CONCLUDING NOTE.

However correct we may consider the opinions advanced in this little tract, we are not so sanguine as to suppose, that they will be generally approved, much less, that they will be shortly, to any great extent, adopted. Custom and prejudice will render most persons blind to an error, until it has been often presented to their view. This is a fact that the history of every improvement in the arts and sciences evinces.—The most then, that is for some years to be expected, is, that the public mind should take a direction favorable to improvement in the art of communicating knowledge. A tendency to this is very perceptible at present, in the disposition that exists to encourage little elementary works in the different sciences, written in a popular style ; and as the community becomes more enlightened, every subject of knowledge will become more and more simplified. The course of elementary instruction will receive a thorough examination, and the strictest attention will be paid to the *manner of beginning* to learn. The *initiatary department* in our schools will be thought the most important, and be made the subject of legislative attention.

But though these things will certainly take place, yet being among the events of future and distant years, a friend to some of our opinions might ask, “whether the present mode of teaching could not be so modified as to meet present feelings and prejudices, and nevertheless include in it many of the useful plans which are offered by the projectors of the day.”—This we think might be done to a considerable extent, and by this means pave the way for the adoption of such other innovations, as dare not now be more than named.

With this view we will trace out a middle way, between the absurd spelling book mode, and that which reason would dictate. On this plan of accommodation we should have to compromise difficulties. The spelling book must of course retain its place by priority of possession ; but we shall try to press it into our service by using it in a way to which it has not been accustomed.

“The first lesson of a judicious education” says Godwin “is, to learn to think, to discriminate, to remember, to enquire.” The spelling

books best calculated for producing these effects are such as give children an opportunity of reading as soon as they know a few monosyllables. Murray's or Mavor's answer this end best, being composed with a view to teach children to read as soon as possible. We will now take a child of five or six years of age, who is unacquainted with his letters, and put him through the spelling book in our way.—In learning the alphabet, he should be made acquainted with only *one* letter at a time. This letter should be the sole subject of one or more lessons, until he could recognize it in any part of his book. In this way the whole alphabet should be gone through; and would be acquired in less than half the time usually employed at it. To attempt to teach a child the whole alphabet *together* is as absurd as it would be to propose teaching a novice the first six books of Euclid at one lesson.

As soon as he could combine two letters and sound them, he should be taught *to read*.—Reading is no more than sounding certain combinations of letters *at sight*. Every spelling lesson should be thus sounded, after having gone over it in the usual spelling way, and would then form a reading exercise. This would produce a facility in reading that would show none of that sleepy monotony to be met with, where children are a long time kept at the stupid business of first naming letters and then sounding the words. The scholar would acquire a quickness of sight which will enable him to sound the word, by the time another would name one or two of its letters.

We now have our pupil *reading*, but *not thinking* of what he sounds or reads. Our next point and the most needful is to teach him *to think*. For inducing this habit he should give definitions or descriptions in his *own language* of all the easy words in his lesson, with the meaning of which he is acquainted. His errors should be corrected, and we should define all the remaining words, the meaning of which he might be able to understand.

To teach him *to remember*, he should be required at each succeeding lesson to repeat from memory as much of the preceding lesson as he could.—He should as soon as possible make oral phrases on all the words in his lesson to exemplify their meaning. And when he had advanced far enough he should get by heart a selection of classical English words with their meanings. On these he should write phrases and show how they are applied in constructing sentences. This will teach him to think, to compose and to spell well. He would also necessarily be led *to discriminate* and *to enquire*. These exercises being daily corrected for him, would give him a *practical* knowledge of grammar, which would be the best introduction to the *theory*.

Reference to meanings is the main point in a course of English instruction. Without continual explanation, all other exercises are mere *shadows* without substance; and the remembering of what



is read, is impossible. But if meanings are attended to, the mind will have something to act upon, and will gain strength at every step of its progress.

If our scholar meets with any narrative in the course of his lessons, he will be obliged to write it off from memory as well as to give an oral relation of its principal circumstances.

We should by no means keep our pupil the whole day at so disgusting a study as his spelling book affords. The same day that he begins his alphabet, he should begin arithmetic. Indeed, we should feel no qualms of conscience in having him at arithmetic and the nomenclature of geometry six months before he is put to his letters.

A class of little boys beginning their spelling book, might learn one alphabetic lesson, and then take a lesson in arithmetic on Pestalozzi's plan, as arranged by W. Colburn ; who has indeed performed a great public service, in giving to our citizens the *only* simple work on this science, adapted to the faculties of children.— Their next lesson might be what a child would call a *story lesson* in which we should give the whole class a history of some natural curiosity or manufacturing process, and then require them in their turn to relate the same. This would give them an exercise for their memory, and teach them the art of expressing their thoughts orally in a *connected series*. This habit formed thus early, might in many instances in after life, be called into useful exercise.

As variety is absolutely necessary to the comfortable existence of children, their confinement should never be more than an hour at a time, and mostly much less. To give an additional variety to their exercises, a lesson or two of vocal music might be introduced daily. Children cannot be taught to sing to soon ; for by early exercising the muscles of the larynx, they will become capable of commanding higher tones during life, than they ever would have done without commencing so soon. The effect as respects their health would also be beneficial ; for the exercise that singing would give their lungs would tend to strengthen their chests, and in a great measure secure them against many breast complaints.

There might be another exercise connected with the spelling book course of children, so as to temper a little the mental nausea it occasions. This should be a course of experiments of the more easy and simple sort, in natural philosophy and chemistry.—Should some be disposed to smile at the idea of children mixing these studies with their spelling book lessons, we would desire them to reflect on the subject a few moments, and we have no doubt they will soon perceive that natural philosophy, chemistry, all the portions of natural history that any neighborhood afford, as well as a knowledge of geography from maps, &c. may all be much easier learned by a child than its spelling book. If these studies, then, are not

allowed to *precede* the spelling course, they ought at least to *accompany* it. There would be no need of expensive apparatus to effect this ; for most of the experiments which elucidate the principles of chemistry and mechanical philosophy, could be performed by an ingenious teacher, without going farther than the utensils of a kitchen. The great laboratory of nature, also, is daily furnishing us with a succession of experiments, which might be made a perpetual source of instruction to a class of pupils.

The arrangement of our lessons might, with these designs, be something like the following, viz. First lesson, spelling book ; second, arithmetic ; third, histories or story lessons ; fourth, spelling book ; fifth, arithmetic and nomenclature of geometry ; sixth, philosophical and chemical experiments. This series of exercises would secure variety and entertainment, at the same time that they would afford instruction on important subjects.

The musical lesson would be a general one, and might be introduced at any time to relieve ennui.

The method of comparing different objects represented by two words should also be pursued ; and most of the exercises which we have noticed in the body of this essay might be incorporated with the course of lessons just mentioned.

By the time a child would get through his spelling book on this plan, he would be pretty well qualified for entering on a course of reading, which should consist of a number of small, well written works on natural history, geography, chemistry, natural philosophy, English grammar, civil history, &c. &c.

It is a gratifying circumstance that our book stores are in general pretty well furnished with the means of aiding this plan. A great number of excellent little works have appeared within ten years past, very well adapted to these views. We will mention a few of them, and then conclude our tiresome note.

As a book of definitions for the use of schools, we have met with none that has higher claims to attention than Grimshaw's etymological dictionary. With the exception of a few errors this work should be gone through in the way of definition lessons, connected with the writing of phrases on every word.

With regard to arithmetic, we have no treatise on it in this country, fit for children, excepting W. Colburn's before mentioned.— This should be used universally, and may be commenced as soon as a child can tell the difference between three and four.

In geography we have a superabundance of elementary works, mostly very good. The little works of Cummings, Willetts, Worcester, Morse, &c. answer very well to give a knowledge of the rudiments of this interesting and useful branch of study.

In natural philosophy we have several little treatises ; among the best of which are, Blain's grammar of natural philosophy, Joyce's scientific dialogues, and Mrs. Marcet's conversations on natural

philosophy. Either of these will afford a pupil a general view of this science.

With regard to chemistry there is no scarcity of elementary works. Those best calculated for children are Blair's grammar of chemistry by Comstock, Mrs Marcet's conversations, and Parke's rudiments. These give a very interesting view of this fascinating and valuable science.

In natural history we have no work adapted to the use of schools. Bingley's three volumes entitled "Useful knowledge," are a judicious selection of some of the most useful points of information in zoology, botany and mineralogy. As preparatory to that branch of natural history which treats of animated nature, we have no popular treatise on physiology and comparative anatomy. This is a desideratum, and ought to be supplied by some able hand. Vegetable physiology is also neglected in our popular works on the vegetable kingdom.—Geology and mineralogy have not been treated in such a way as to render them accessible to the children composing our schools. The advantages resulting from acquainting children early with these branches of human knowledge, are incalculable.—Were every child, while going to school, taught to analyse all the minerals in the neighbourhood, and informed on those points of geological connexion which obtain between the strata of different minerals, discoveries the most invaluable to society might be made, even during the rambles of our school boys ; and much more so after self interest should have spurred on curiosity in its researches into our hills and mountains.

On English grammar we abound in compilations, travesties, &c. written by wise and ignorant, competent and incompetent. Murray or Ingersoll for *common* views of practical grammar are the best ; doctors Webster, Wilson and Gray for curious and *uncommon* views on this subject. Webster's philosophical grammar of our language is a very useful work, and ought by all means to be read. It is an extension of the curious and interesting researches of Horne Tooke in his work called "The diversions at Purley."

In civil history, we have a number of treatises, intended for schools. Tytler's elements, as a general introduction, is perhaps as unexceptionable as most of them.

On the history of particular nations, Grimshaw's and Goodrich's United States, Grimshaw's England and Rome, Goldsmith's Greece and Bigland's France, may give a scholar all that is necessary to be known before the age of fifteen.

Either succeeding or united with the study of history, a pupil should get by rote, the constitution of the United States, the constitution of his own state, and the declaration of independence. He should also read some small work on political economy and moral science.

Some small work on heathen mythology, should also be read to



prepare a scholar for reading poetry with satisfaction. Boyse's Pantheon, is a good school book of this kind. Tooke's Pantheon for the use of schools, is exceptionable from the want of a proper delicacy of language. The plan and general execution of the work is good, and there has been an altered and expurgated edition published by E. Cole of the city of Baltimore, that merits attention.—Tooke's colloquial style is changed to the narrative, which is a change for the worse ; but the other improvements are such as to put it before all other editions of that work for schools.

After going through the preceding course a boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age would be able to read with satisfaction by himself a course of the English classics in prose and poetry, and might accomplish something like a good English education.—Though it would still be defective in many respects, yet it would certainly be superior to the grade of English education commonly met with.

Much more remains to be said on this very extensive subject, but lest we should exhaust the reader's patience by any farther detail of our singular notions, we will at present conclude with requesting him "to think on these things."





## ERRATA.

Page 9, (note) line 5, for "teaching than" read, teaching, longer than—

Page 10, (note) first line, for "Thoughtout" read, "Through" out—

Page 19, line 32, for "thinkieg" read, thinking—

Page 21, line 10, for "with pens" read, with their pens—

Page 26, line 18, for "Here then" read, Here their—

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 847 584 1



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 847 584